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# Keeping a Clozed Mind on Reading

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## KEEPING A CLOZED MIND ON READING

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Cloze has a rich and interesting history as a method for encouraging reading achievement as well as for use as an approach to measuring reading competence. Cloze can be used effectively in instructional programs in many ways, including (1) paired or small group work, (2) "crossword cloze" type activities, and (3) multiple-choice type formats. The "cloze informal" contains a series of graded passages which presents reading instructors with a method for matching students with appropriate instructional materials. In the "cloze informal", students' scores are obtained from performance on a series of cloze passages. Scores can be used to assess competence at various levels of difficulty and, further, can be compared at a later date with scores obtained from readmission of the set of cloze passages.

Since the use of the cloze procedure as a tool for the evaluation of reading achievement was introduced by Taylor (1953), much research has been undertaken which suggests that implementation of this procedure can be a valuable asset in measuring reading achievement (Jongsma 1971 a). For example, group administered cloze measures can serve as adequate substitutes for the highly valuable, though cumbersome and time consuming informal reading inventory, which must be individually administered (Alexander, 1968, Ransom, 1970).

Concerning content oriented reading material, cloze tests can be used to accurately assess mastery of material as capably as well constructed multiple choice tests, but with the advantage of being even more objective and much easier to construct (Rankin and Culhane, 1969). Further, Rankin and Culhane suggested that because cloze measures provide extreme variation in possible scores, they can very accurately differentiate among students relative level of mastery. Regarding determining the level of difficulty on content area texts for individual students, Jones and Pikulski (1979), suggested that cloze measures could be used to help match students with the appropriate material.

Valuable and extensive though the research has been, it appears that cloze has not become widely utilized in other than research projects. In this light the question is raised, "How does a teacher use cloze advantageously within the classroom?" As demonstrated below, the answers to this question are neither complex nor mysterious.

### Cloze and Reading Instruction

Introduction of cloze systems to young children inevitably presents some problems. Primary school students generally work in materials over which they can respond accurately 80 or 90 or even 100 per cent of the time. Meeting success, of course, is highly desirable. Cloze work, on the other hand, can cause consternation among children in that they frequently might feel that they are "wrong". It is, therefore, vital that children with whom the cloze procedure is used either as a teaching technique (Jongsma, 1971 b) or later as a testing method, be thoroughly familiar with the relative differences in response procedures between cloze systems and more conventional reading strategies. In other words, in working with cloze, the student must have an appreciation of success which is quantitatively different from that associated with more ty-

pical reading instruction.

Due to the potential for excessive stress, it appears highly inadvisable to introduce students to cloze while using it to evaluate their reading achievement. Therefore, before using cloze to measure the level of reading competence, it is suggested that methods of teaching using cloze techniques be implemented. A representative, though by no means comprehensive, sample of instructional procedures using cloze is presented below:

1. Students can work in pairs to determine which words have been deleted from a cloze passage. Discussion with classmates and/or instructor concerning suggested replacement words then follows. The students are told the exact words that were deleted.

2. The "maze" technique (Guthrie, Seifert, Burnham, and Caplon, 1974) involves the use of a multiple choice cloze format. That is, instead of encountering blank spaces, the reader finds several words from which to select the word which he or she thinks was deleted.

3. Also using the multiple choice format, Silky (1979) suggested that cloze be introduced on a continuum as an instructional procedure in the content areas. Students at first would work on selections with a multiple choice format to help them determine words deleted. The number of choices is gradually increased, requiring more efficient use of the context to determine the deleted word. Silky suggested that most students would eventually gain sufficient competence so that they would not need the multiple choices at all.

4. Quillen and Dwyer (1979) proposed that students could gain in competence and confidence in using cloze through procedures involving the use of answer sheets, in which responses are made on blank spaces corresponding to letters on each deleted word, some or none of which might have letters form the deleted word. For example, if the first

deleted word is "school", the response line might be 1 \_ \_ \_ h o \_ \_ l. Quillen and Dwyer also suggested using a crossword puzzle type grid in which deleted words are represented in the grid by a series of boxes, each of which corresponds to a letter in a deleted word.

5. Thomas (1978) provided an extensive examination of methods in which cloze could be valuably utilized in reading instruction. This researcher included strategies for using cloze type activities to help develop student competencies in (1) using context clues, (2) determining the relationship of pronouns and pronouns referents, (3) understanding cause and effect and (4) comparing and contrasting.

It is evident that there are numerous ways to profitably use cloze type activities to promote reading competence. An imaginative approach to using cloze in a teaching environment undoubtedly would yield countless additional variations depending on students evident needs.

### The Cloze Informal

Once the students have become familiar with the cloze technique in an instructional environment, it can also be used efficiently to evaluate reading achievement. Researchers have suggested that standardized tests, although they may have useful purposes, tend to overestimate instructional level (Sipay, 1962); Davis, 1970). Consequently, it appears that reliance on grade equivalent scores derived from the administration of standardized tests tends to place students in materials that are at frustration rather than instructional level. The best measure for placing students at an appropriate instructional level would be by using a well constructed informal reading inventory made over the materials intended for use in instruction (Beldon, 1969; Powell, 1968; Betts, 1957). As suggested earlier, utilization of the individually administered

informal reading inventory is usually so time consuming as to be impractical for use by a teacher with all members of a class. Yet replacement of students in materials at which they can profit substantially from reading instruction is central to the process of reading instruction.

The concept of cloze informal presents the possibility of determining appropriate instructional levels for an entire class in an efficient manner. The cloze informal can be easily and comprehensively designed as demonstrated below:

1. Locate selections within proposed instructional materials which appear to be representative of the content.
2. Select gradually lengthening passages at various levels which contain messages which, while not necessarily comprehensive, contain related thoughts.
3. Make cloze selections over the passages. Leave the first sentence in-

tact. Starting with a randomly selected number from one to five, proceed to delete every fifth word in the remainder of the selection.

4. Prepare student response sheets. On a typed copy, replace the deleted words with numbered blanks of uniform length. Besides the selection, list numbered blank spaces for the students to enter their responses. See Figure One.

Once a series of cloze passages has been obtained, they can be administered to groups of students. For example, four selections ranging from primer to the 2<sup>nd</sup> level could be attempted by students at one sitting. Evaluation of the results would indicate which students should continue with the cloze series. It is important to note that older and more capable students might respond with relatively few exact word replacements at levels substantially below their achievement

FIGURE 1

A Sample Page from a Series of Cloze Passages.

In Livia, visitors are usually most impressed by the beautiful coast of the kingdom. Surrounded by 1 mountains, people have lived 2 Livia for centuries, farming 3 fertile land and fishing 4 great ocean. One day 5 the history of Livia, 6 were dark clouds broken 7 and there were rays 8 sunlight . . .

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

capabilities simply because the development of their language skills leads them to provide more sophisticated responses than are warranted in the easier selections. Such happenings are to be overlooked with emphasis placed on examination of performance on more difficult material. In order to facilitate scoring, only exact replacement responses are counted as correct. Errors in spelling can be overlooked provided that it is evident that

the misspelling was an attempt to spell the exact word deleted.

There have been various sets of criteria proposed for determining independent, instructional, and frustration levels using the cloze measures. Further, Alexander (1968) concluded that ratios designating independent, instructional, and frustration levels might vary based on classroom experiences. While certainly not only usable figures, Ransom (1970)

determined criteria which appears satisfactory for use with the cloze informal. See Figure Two below.

Level	Percent Correct
Independent	50%
Instructional	30-49%
Probable Frustration	20-29%
Frustration	Below 20%

FIGURE 2  
Ransom's Cloze Criteria

Scores at various grade equivalents can be easily obtained and recorded for comparative purposes. Figure Three presents a sample record sheet. The exami-

ner can determine the relative degree of success at various levels of difficulty. Individual student responses could also be examined to determine various competencies including:

1. the relationship of responses made to the overall content of the message
2. use of context clues in determining the deleted word
3. spelling capabilities
4. sense of grammatical structure

The cloze informal could be readministered at a later time to determine advances made. Gains, or lack of them, could be observed at various levels of difficulty.

FIGURE 3  
Sheet for Recording Student's Cloze Scores

NAME _____		CLASS _____	
CLOZE SCORES			
DATE _____	PRETEST	LEVEL	DATE _____
	Cloze Passages		POSTEST
			Cloze Passages
	1. _____%	(PP)	1. _____%
	2. _____%	(P)	2. _____%
	3. _____%	(12)	
	:		
	10. _____%	(6)	10. _____%
COMMENTS: _____			

**Summary**

Use of the cloze procedure, frequently with modifications, can provide reading instructors with an interesting and instructionally sound approach for supplementing the basic reading program. Cloze techniques can be used advantageously, both for teaching people how to read more competently and in evaluating their reading achievement.

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## THE SINGLE VOWELS REVISITED FOR TEACHING OF READING

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This study was designed (1) to unify much of the discrepancy between open and closed syllables, (2) to increase the percentage of utility for the terminal single vowel-consonant-*e* generalization, and (3) to reanalyze the final consonant-*l-e* generalization. In order to do this the author identified certain letter combinations or frequently occurring bases which lowered the percentage of utility for the innumerable items above. With these isolated, the percentages of utility for the generalizations covering the remaining words were increased. The implications of this research, in conjunction with selected single vowel generalizations as dealt with by Burmeister (1968), is such that the English language yields a phonic fitness for single vowels which many have considered impossible to obtain.

### Statement of the Problem

Reading teachers were surprised to discover that many phonic generalizations which they assumed were above dispute were found to be suspect by a 1963 publication of Clymer entitled "The Utility of Phonic Generalizations in the Primary Grades" (1963). Since that time many studies have addressed not only the 45 generalizations which he addressed but also other generalizations dealing with various aspects of graphemic relationships in the English language. Although some generalizations have been demonstrated to have consistently high utility, many of the generalizations have not.

### The Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to determine whether selected generalizations for a single vowel, be it in a closed syllable, and open syllable, or the terminal vowel of a word, become inefficient when the vowel is accompanied by particular letters or letter combinations or if there is no apparent pattern to their inconsistency. A secondary purpose of this study is to increase the sample size and then to reanalyze the consonant-*l-e* generalization as reported by Burmeister (1969).

### Review of the Related Literature

A review of the literature will reveal that phonics instruction had its conception in the United States by the publication in 1783 of the *Blue Back Spelling Books* by the patriotic zealot Noah Webster, who offered it not so much for use as a pedagogic technique, but as a gesture to somewhat unify the dialectical patterns of the post Revolutionary War era (Smith, 1955). Many teachers, who sensed certain possibilities in teaching phonics even though research had not been conducted, began using a phonics approach in the teaching of reading. It was not until the 1920's that reported studies in the reading literature, such as those conducted by Vogel (1928), Cor-dits (1925), Osburn (1925), Atkins (1926), and Washburn (1938), began dealing with word structure. These studies, however, dealt more with the relative frequency of phonograms, however, rather than with the notion that phonics in general or selected elements of phonics offered statistical importance

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